

Press release

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[Is literature the new politics?](#)

With conventional politics failing to provide people with a dialogue to discuss ideas about society, novels are increasingly filling the gap of social discourse.

The Manchester Salon is hosting a discussion on the role the novel plays in shaping conversations about politics, whether through the existential plots of Sartre and Camus or the social realism of Victorian novelists such as Dickens.

Leading the discussion will be author John Siddique, English literature lecturer Angelica Michelis and English teacher Ian Betts.

The popularity of the Kindle has been seen as evidence of a resurgence in reading, while the engagement of writers such as Dave Eggers with current events such as hurricane Katrina shows that literature is no longer afraid of confronting the big issues.

In response, politicians increasingly appeal to voters' emotions and talk of the need to frame a narrative for their policies, adopting the language and form of the novel for their own ends.

In 2001 Nobel prize-winning author Mario Vargas Llosa argued that a society without literature is “condemned to become spiritually barbaric, and even to jeopardize its freedom.”

There are clearly some new trends emerging in politics and literature, but to what extent is either area of thinking affecting the other? Indeed, some argue that recent riots are telling evidence of such ‘spiritual barbarism’ in our midst.

Date: Wednesday, 23 May, 2012, at 6.45pm, £5 entry.

Venue: Blackwell University Bookshop, Oxford Street, Manchester, M2 1NL

For further details on the event and Manchester Salon’s activities, contact Simon Belt at events@manchestersalon.org.uk or ring 07809 669824.